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ADDRESS OF  
WILLIAM C. BROWN

President  
New York Central Lines

AT FOUNDER'S DAY EXERCISES OF THE  
CORNELL UNIVERSITY

ITHACA, N. Y., JANUARY 11, 1910

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MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

I esteem it an exceedingly great privilege, as well as a distinguished honor, to participate in these exercises in honor of the founder of this great institution of learning.

The name and fame of Ezra Cornell appeal to me with peculiar significance, because he was one of the creators of, and was long identified with, the great business of telegraphy; and his name was a very familiar one to me in the early seventies, when I was a young telegrapher.

It is usual upon occasions of this character which mark the milestones in the life of an institution, a community or an individual, to deal largely in things of the past, to indulge in remarks of retrospective character; but I am going to ask you to consider for a few moments a subject which I regard as of paramount present interest, and which is destined to increase in importance with startling rapidity.

Almost unconsciously the present generation and the one that preceded it have witnessed and are now witnessing the culmination and end of one of the greatest

epochs of all history; the tremendous, far-reaching significance of which, when viewed in large perspective, is but faintly comprehended even by the most profound, clear-visioned students of political economy.

Two thousand years before the birth of Christ, in the early dawn of civilization, history tells of a tribe of yellow men who left the Valley of the Tigris or the Euphrates, and emigrated to the East. I think this is the only recorded case of emigration in that direction, and historians tell us that in all probability this tribe of yellow men located on the western shore of the Pacific Ocean and was the nucleus of the present great Chinese nation, with its four hundred million souls.

A thousand years later Grecian adventurers crossed the Aegean Sea and established the first colonies upon its western shores. This was the beginning of that great westward drift of population that has never ceased; and through all the centuries the ever-receding west, absorbing and assimilating the millions of the overflow of older civilizations, has continually called for more.

For more than three hundred years the nations of the Old World have found on this new continent an indispensable safety valve. Our broad, unoccupied prairies have furnished to the discontented, the dispossessed and unfortunate of every nation an opportunity to begin life anew under conditions happier than could be found in any other land.

When Cornell was founded in 1865, almost the entire trans-Mississippi empire was a wilderness.

That year marked the close of the Civil War, and the States of Iowa, Minnesota and Nebraska could have furnished a quarter section of fertile government land to every veteran mustered out of the military service of

the nation. Great states and territories, with their wealth of forest and prairies, lay waiting to be peopled.

To-day, the last county of the last state and territory where cultivation is possible has been settled. That great wave of population beginning with the Grecian colonies, which crossed the Aegean and the Adriatic seas a thousand years before the birth of Christ, has broken on the eastern shore of the Pacific.

The tribe of yellow men that journeyed east, multiplied by millions, occupies the western shore of that mighty ocean—the great westward moving procession of the centuries has encircled the globe. Soon a great human undertow must set back toward the east, and the westward tide which cannot be materially checked must settle in turbulent eddies about our great centers of population.

In a letter written by Lord Macauley to Mr. H. S. Randall, a citizen of this country, under date of May 23, 1857, he said.

“As long as you have a boundless extent of fertile, unoccupied land, your laboring population will be far more at ease than the laboring population of the Old World. But the time will come when New England will be as thickly peopled as Old England. You will have your Manchesters and your Birminghams, and in these Manchesters and Birminghams hundreds of thousands of artisans will assuredly be sometimes out of work. Then your institutions will be fairly brought to the test.”

Two important features of this remarkable prophecy of a half century ago have been fulfilled. The boundless extent of fertile, unoccupied land is gone. We have our Manchesters and our Birminghams by the score, and

in times of great depression such as will certainly come, our unemployed will be numbered not by the hundreds of thousands but by the million.

Is it not time to "take thought of the morrow," and to make such preparation as may be possible against the day of stress and test predicted by Macauley?

In this direction I desire to briefly suggest two plans having a common purpose, and perhaps equal in importance.

First: The broadening of our methods of education in all our schools and colleges. I would give no less attention to graduating lawyers and physicians, but would give a great deal more to turning out of our public schools young men with a good, common-school education plus a year's practical training at some useful trade.

I would have a first-class manual training school attached to every high school and to every college and university, where young men could be turned out good, practical journeymen blacksmiths, boilermakers, carpenters, cabinet workers, plumbers, or skilled workmen at some other useful trade. I would increase the capacity of these schools to accommodate every child in the community, and then I would make attendance compulsory.

I have discussed this question with officials of public school boards and with the presidents of some of our colleges and, in a majority of cases, have been met with the suggestion that a course of this kind would be likely to antagonize organized labor. I am glad to-day that the doubt as to the attitude of organized labor upon this important subject has been definitely set at rest. Recently at the annual convention of the American Federation of Labor, a special committee on industrial education appointed one year ago to make a study of this subject,

submitted its report, from which the following is an extract:

“Organized labor favors that plan of industrial training which will give our boys and girls such training as will help them to advance after they are in industry. We believe that as much attention should be given to the proper education of those who work at our industry as is now given to those who prepare to enter professional and managerial careers.”

The report was submitted by a committee of which John Mitchell was chairman, and like the man, it is progressive, hopeful and helpful.

If we could adopt Germany's system of technical training, her research and thoroughness, and combine them with our inventions, the combination would dominate the world. Without these fundamental qualities, it is only a question of time when this country must surrender its place as a leader among the great manufacturing nations of the world.

A German commission which recently visited this country recognized the fact that great as the United States is, we will not continue to be a dangerous competitor of Germany in our manufacturing industries after we have a little further depleted our abundant supply of raw material.

This confident belief is based upon the notorious lack of technical education in this country as compared with that of Germany, where almost every workman is a master of his trade.

The report of the commission asserts that:

“American colleges turn out a host of professional men, but few skilled artisans and craftsmen.

The meagerness of technical education, the trivial contingent of chemists, dyers, weavers and electricians seems a shortsighted policy for a country of 80,000,000 people."

Successful demur to this indictment is impossible. It is a true bill.

I would make our agricultural colleges and the agricultural departments of all colleges in fact what they are in name by limiting admission to young men who want to study and school themselves in scientific agriculture for the purpose of becoming first-class farmers, thoroughly equipped for and vitally interested in that most honorable profession

I would postpone the day of test foreshadowed by Lord Macauley by a system of thorough education in agricultural methods that would result in doubling our rural population, and more than doubling the product of the nation's farms.

The United States as a whole has as fertile soil and as favorable climate as any country in the world. Given the same intelligent methods of seed selection, fertilization and cultivation, our lands will produce as large crops as those of any other nation. A simple comparison of the average annual yield per acre of the principal cereals in this country with those of the older nations is the severest possible criticism of our methods, or our want of method. During the last ten years our farms have produced an average annual yield of wheat of less than 14 bushels per acre. England produces more than 32, Germany about 28, the Netherlands more than 34, and France approximately 20.

Of oats, the United States produces an average annual yield of 23.7 bushels per acre, England 42, Germany 46, and the Netherlands 53 bushels.



Potatoes, like wheat, corn and bread, are a food staple of the poor man. Our average yield is 85 bushels per acre, while Germany, Belgium and Great Britain produce 250 bushels.

Germany, with an arable area no greater than some of our larger states, produces approximately two billion bushels of potatoes annually, while the aggregate crop of the United States averages barely two hundred and seventy-five million bushels per annum; and in the year ended June 30, 1909, we imported 8,400,000 bushels.

For half a century we have very justly regarded our country as the granary of the world, and our annual exports of food stuffs have formed a basis for a large balance of trade in our favor. Our exports of this character show a steady and alarmingly rapid decline. In the past, increase in population, increase in consumption, has been met by multiplied acres. This is no longer possible, or at least only to a very limited and constantly diminishing extent. Increased consumption in the future must be provided for, not by an increase in acres but by an increase in the yield per acre.

Each year immigration and natural increase add approximately two million hungry mouths to be fed, and it calls for an increase of approximately 75,000,000 bushels of food producing cereal per annum to supply this demand.

In 1898 the total acreage of corn, wheat, oats, barley and rye in the United States was a little less than one hundred and fifty-two million acres, the yield 22.5 bushels per acre, the aggregate product three billion, four hundred and twelve million bushels, of which there was exported almost five hundred and ninety-nine million bushels.

In 1908 the acreage had increased to more than one hundred and ninety million acres; the yield was 22.8 bushels per acre; the aggregate yield four billion, three hundred and thirty-nine million bushels; but our exports had fallen to one hundred and sixty-five million bushels, a decrease of 72 per cent.

This tremendous falling off in exports of grain and its products suggests the possibility that the grain may have been fed to stock and exported in the shape of beef and pork, but the falling off in the exports of these commodities for the period named is fully as startling as in grain.

I have noted with regret expressions of satisfaction and self-congratulation upon the part of the press over the fact that the aggregate value of farm products has increased from four billion, four hundred and seventeen million dollars in 1898 to eight billion, seven hundred and sixty million dollars in 1909, unmindful of the disturbing fact that this increase in value is the result almost entirely of increased acreage and a startling increase in price per bushel, and not the result of an increased yield per acre.

This failure to increase the production of the nation's farms by increasing the number of bushels per acre is steadily and rapidly increasing the cost of living; and manufacturers, merchants and employers of labor of every class are scanning the future with anxious eyes, for the end does not seem to be in sight.

The only possible solution, the only possible salvation for the country, is an immediate and most thorough awakening of our people to an appreciation of the overshadowing importance of this condition, followed by a systematic, persevering campaign of education. The Hon. A. S. Draper, State Commissioner of Education, in

an address on "Agriculture and Its Educational Needs," summed the whole matter up tersely and comprehensively in the following conclusion:

"We should enter upon a great system of agricultural extension. The schools, from highest to lowest, should act in accord, not only in training students and in scientific research, but in carrying knowledge to the very doors of the farmers. Evangelistic work in agriculture should go everywhere. Seed specials should be run over the railroads. The blood of the best farm animals should be distributed throughout the state. Object lessons of special interest to both men and women should be carried in all directions. The applications should be especially adapted to every section, and the fullest attention should be given to the less favored rather than to the more favored counties of the state."

New York State should be a leader in this work, first because no state in the Union needs it so badly; second, because the Empire State should be a leader in this great work as she is in almost every other great national movement.

Ninety years ago the richness and fertility of the soil of New York State and the production of her farms was the wonder and admiration of European travelers. In 1860 this state was among the first of the great agricultural states of the Union. To-day the State of Maine, lying farther to the north, with its rocks and its forests, raises more per acre of all the cereals than we do, and her potato crop averages 225 bushels, as against 82 bushels per acre in New York.

I have read with great interest the reports of your president and the heads of the various departments for

the years 1908-09, and note that an appropriation of approximately one million dollars for needed additional buildings and equipment, and an increase in the annual appropriation for maintenance of \$50,000 per annum is to be asked at the hands of the State Legislature.

The fact that the statement is made that unless enlargements and improvements are provided for, "the number of students that can be admitted to this College of Agriculture must be immediately limited," suggests the possibility of a doubt about this appropriation being made.

This doubt is emphasized by the earnest appeal with which Director Bailey closes the report of his department. It is worthy of reproduction, and I want it given the widest possible publicity. It is as follows:

"I wish to repeat, what I have so many times expressed, that we are beginning a college of agriculture, not completing one. Few persons even yet realize what aids an institution of this kind will contribute to the welfare of the future. I am in position to appreciate this, for the most urgent requests are constantly coming to my desk from all departments in the college for the means to do useful work. These are all unselfish. They are not requests to empower an officer to build up his department, but to enable him to do work for his fellows all over the state. I am powerless to provide the means, and I see the opportunities pass and the men grow old and the work of the people remaining not done. I should have liked the opportunity to have gone directly to the people with a plan complete enough to have appealed to their imagination."

Can it be possible that the Legislature of this state

will hesitate for one moment about an appropriation of a million dollars for this important object? I will guarantee a return of one hundred times this amount each year upon the investment.

If, through the improved methods worked out and introduced by this college, the production of potatoes alone per acre of the State could have been brought up to that of the State of Maine, it would have added fifty-two millions to the bank account of the farmers of New York State on the crop of 1908.

In the year 1908 a friend of mine who some years ago bought five thousand acres of land in New York State raised 200 acres of corn, which yielded 50 bushels of shelled corn per acre; his potatoes averaged 350 bushels to the acre; hay four tons, and beets 35 tons per acre. This was the result not of intensive farming, but of simply intelligent farming, and these crops were raised in the extreme northern part of the state—twelve miles from the Canadian line, at the northern end of Lake Champlain.

The same intelligent cultivation will produce like results in every county in the state.

The Department of Agriculture of the State of New York publishes a bulletin containing a list of farms for sale, and the man who can read it and appreciate the full significance of this list without a feeling of humiliation is lacking in that state pride and loyalty which every citizen should possess.

Sixty-three thousand, four hundred and thirty-two acres of improved farms, with fences, houses, barns, etc., at an average price of \$17.78 per acre. Nearly 100,000 acres at an average price of \$25 per acre.

In the light of present conditions the agricultural situ-

ation in this state seems utterly incomprehensible and inexcusable; but to those familiar with the history of agricultural development and evolution during the past twenty-five years it is not so strange.

From the earliest settlements on the Atlantic Coast until the last few years there have been great areas of fertile lands open for pre-emption by the homesteader or for sale very cheap and on long time by the western railroads. As railroads were extended into the wilderness settlers were located by the thousand, and each new development was followed by an over-production of farm products of every kind, which brought the price of these products below the cost of production. Corn sold in Iowa, Nebraska and Kansas for 10 to 12 cents per bushel, and I have seen it burned for fuel because it was cheaper than wood or coal. These conditions produced a ruinous collapse of values of farming land in New York, Pennsylvania and New England.

Not alone in our country were these conditions making themselves felt: Railroads were being built in India, Australia, New Zealand, Russia and Argentina, and cheap land and its products competed in every market on the globe. The conditions then were the exact reverse of the present. Then production was rapidly overtaking consumption, with a steady fall in values. Now consumption is overtaking production with alarming rapidity and values are rising by leaps and bounds. Then increased consumption could be provided for by increased acreage; now this is impossible. Increased consumption can only be met by increased production on substantially our present acreage. Then the outlook for agriculture in the eastern states was dark and almost hopeless; the market was limited, prices low, and the tendency was

always down. Now the market is unlimited at liberal and steadily advancing prices. Then there was a reason for cheap land in this and other eastern states; now every acre of agricultural land, worn out and impoverished as much of it is, is worth \$100 per acre to build up and replenish. Then there was little incentive to fertilize and maintain the soil by the use of commercial fertilizers; now these expenditures will pay an hundred fold.

Then the choice between the expense and work of maintaining the fertility of the soil in the older states, or opening up and cultivating the rich virgin soil in the west was a legitimate one.

Now no such choice is possible. There is no alternative; we must increase production by more intelligent methods, or we must face the relentless certain coming of the day when we shall not produce food enough to supply our own necessities.

For the year just closed the product of the nation's farms approximated nine billion dollars in value. No man who has made this subject a study doubts that this could be doubled without increase of acreage.

Mr. J. J. Hill, in a recent article published in *The World's Work*, in speaking of the importance of this campaign of better agricultural methods, said:

"The man who assumes to be the farmer's friend or hold his interests dear will constitute himself a missionary of the new dispensation. It is an act of patriotic service to the country. It is a contribution to the welfare of all humanity. It will strengthen the pillars of a government that must otherwise be endangered by some popular upheaval when the land can no longer sustain the population that its bosom bears. Here lies the true secret of our



anxious interest in agricultural methods ; because, in the long run, they mean life or death to future millions who are no strangers or invaders, but our own children's children, and who will pass judgment upon us according to what we have made of the world in which their lot is to be cast."

Is it possible to exaggerate or magnify the importance of this subject? Can the imagination conceive of a duty of higher, broader patriotism or one that involves more far-reaching, comprehensive philanthropy?

Ezra Cornell was himself a practical farmer. He had been president of the State Agricultural Society. He was in sympathy with all forms of industry and desired to see it recognized in our educational institutions of high grade. In speaking of Cornell University in simple, but prophetic phrase, he said:

"I would found an institution where any person can find instruction in any study."

It is no disparagement of other institutions or instrumentalities to say that this great institution that has made the name of Cornell imperishable, has done more and is doing more, for agriculture in this state than all others combined ; but I believe in this direction it has not passed the threshold of its usefulness.

I believe that from the halls of this university have been graduated, and will be graduated, the men who are destined to lead in a great renaissance of agricultural possibilities, giving to this state a new birth of marvelous opportunity, of wonderful achievement, and that in leading this great work in this grand old Empire State you will find yourselves leaders in a movement that will be epochal in significance, and continent wide in scope.





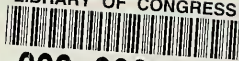
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